

On Gender Equality in Junior High School English Textbooks: A Case Study of the Chinese PEP Eighth-Grade Textbooks



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ABSTRACT: With the development of society, the consciousness of female subjectivity has gradually awakened, and the issue of gender equality in the field of education has also attracted more and more attentions. Education plays an important role in constructing students' concept of gender equality, and textbooks, as an important medium for students to receive education, are an important part of promoting educational equality. In addition, the junior high school stage is a critical period for students to develop values, and textbooks, as an educational medium, should help students establish a correct understanding of gender roles. However, previous studies have shown that there is an implicit bias of gender inequality in teaching materials. This study conducts an in-depth study on gender equality in the PEP eighth-grade English textbooks. It adopts the literature review method to sort out the relevant research at home and abroad, and uses the content analysis method to comprehensively analyze the gender roles, illustrations, and language use in the textbooks. It also combines quantitative and qualitative analysis methods to discuss the current situation and causes of gender equality. The study finds that there are gender stereotypes and gender discrimination in textbooks, which have an impact on students' gender perception and self-perception. Concerning these issues, this paper proposes improvement countermeasures, aiming to promote the fairness of junior high school English education, to help students establish correct gender concepts and self-awareness, and to provide references and suggestions for the compilation of teaching materials.

KEYWORDS: English textbooks, gender equality, gender roles, PEP textbooks.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is being increasingly valued as the core of human rights and social justice. Ever since 1960 equal opportunity in education has been advocated by The United Nations (2020) through *Convention against Discrimination in Education*, which pointed out that discrimination in education based on sex should be prohibited, while the United Nations' (2020) *Sustainable Development Goals* listed "achieving gender equality" as one of the key goals. Two main factors contribute to this emphasis. Firstly, gender equality is a legacy of history. In the past, male-dominated social systems and cultural customs prevailed, resulting in unfair treatment and discrimination against women in many ways. However, with the progress of society and the rise of feminist ideas, more and more people have begun to pay attention to the issue of gender equality and call for social change. Such a change requires not only moral equality but also progress in economic and social development. Secondly, gender equality is both a human rights issue and a prerequisite and indicator for people-centered sustainable development (UN Women Center, 2020). Modern society has also given increasing importance to values such as human rights, equality, and freedom, which have a profound impact on people's perceptions and attitudes towards gender equality issues. The increasing number of people are beginning to realize that gender equality is not only a women's issue, but also a men's issue, and that it is not only the rights and interests that women should pursue, but also the equality that men should pursue. This change in mindset will help to push the society to make greater progress on the issue of gender equality.

English is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world and a compulsory subject for students in China. Junior high school is a critical period for students to learn this language. As an important part of junior high school education, the selection and presentation of English textbooks have an important impact on students' awareness of gender equality, for in junior high school, students' cognitive and value development enters a critical period, and textbooks, as the main teaching medium, play a crucial role in shaping students' cognition of gender roles. In the words of Michael Apple: "It is the textbook which establishes so much of the material conditions for teaching and learning in classrooms in many countries throughout the world, and it is the textbook that often defines what is elite and legitimate culture to pass on" (1986, p. 81). However, previous studies have shown that there is an implicit bias of gender inequality in teaching materials. This bias manifests itself in different expectations and stereotypes of men and women. Gender bias has largely been observed and acknowledged in education (Weitzman & Rizzo, 1974; Ram, 2008; Khan et al.,

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2014). There has been a long history of depicting women and men in stereotypical ways in school textbooks (Martha, Kitemu & Sunderland, 1997; Lestariyana, Widodo & Sulistiyo, 2020; Nurjanah, et al., 2022). The portrayal of gender bias in textbooks, according to certain perspectives, began shortly following the emergence of the Second Women's Movement in the 1960s (Blumberg, 2008).

This paper focuses on gender equality in junior high school English textbooks. Taking the PEP Eighth-grade English textbook in China as an example, it will analyze its images, texts, and potential gender biases in depth, aiming to arouse public attention to this issue, to help education departments and educators to better understand the current situation and existing problems of gender equality in textbooks, and to provide useful references for improving the content and teaching methods of textbooks, to better promote the implementation of the principle of gender equality in educational practice.

The significance of this study lies in promoting the all-round development of students and the process of educational equity. Guiding students to correctly view and deal with gender issues in textbooks can help them to form a healthy gender concept and self-awareness, and better cope with the challenges and opportunities in life. In-depth research on gender issues in textbooks can help promote equity in education and the implementation of the principles of gender equality and create a more equitable and unbiased learning environment for all students. At the same time, this study can provide useful reference for the education sector in the compilation of teaching materials and curriculum design, so as to promote the sustainable development of the whole education undertaking.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Development and Evolution of Gender Equality Theory

The development and evolution of gender equality theory is a long-term process, which involves many disciplines such as philosophy, political science, economics, sociology, etc. With the rise and development of the feminist movement, the concept of gender equality has gradually become a common goal pursued worldwide.

When discussing gender equality in junior high school English textbooks, we need to review and analyze the historical evolution of gender role concepts. In the traditional pre-modern period, agrarian societies shaped very different social roles and expectations for men and women. Men are usually expected to play a leading role in social production, while women are more responsible for family life and childcare. This division of labor was largely influenced by philosophical and religious ideas, such as Plato's and Christianity's debasement of women's status. These traditional beliefs impose strict norms and restrictions on gender roles, which challenge later notions of gender equality.

With the rise of the Enlightenment, people began to reflect on and challenge traditional ideas. Feminism sprouted, and some thinkers began to advocate for gender equality. For example, Rousseau put forward the idea of equality between men and women in *The Social Contract*, arguing that both men and women should enjoy equal rights and freedoms. As the Industrial Revolution progressed, women also began to enter the labor market, and the feminist movement gradually emerged. The gender equality perspective began with *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948, which emphasized that gender equality is one of the fundamental elements of human rights, that women enjoy equal rights with men (Yi & Zeng, 2021). The feminist movement of the 19th century focused on the struggle for suffrage, which in turn led to a series of social and legal reforms. During this period, the concept of gender equality gradually took root in the hearts of the people and became an important symbol of social progress.

In postmodern and contemporary society, the concept of gender equality has been more widely disseminated and practiced. Postmodern thought has deeply reflected on the traditional concept of gender, and feminist theory has continued to develop and evolve. The rise of schools such as ecofeminism and Third World feminism has given gender equality a more diverse and inclusive connotation. At the same time, social movements and forces of change are driving gender equality. For example, the establishment of International Women's Day and the convening of the Fourth World Conference on Women of the United Nations have further enhanced the attention and practice of gender equality on a global scale. Today, the UN Women Training Center (2020) defines the term "gender equality" as follows:

gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.

Previous Researches on Gender Equality in Textbooks

Previous Researches Outside China: Outside China in the 40s of the 20th century, the issue of gender equality in textbooks began to receive attentions. Levine (1946, as cited in Cui, 2019) proposed that "the image of gender in textbooks affects students' gender behavior" for the first time, which first projected attention to the impact of gender issues in textbooks on students' behavior.

Trecker (1973, as cited in Cui, 2019) was the first person to provide an in-depth analysis of gender issues in textbooks on specific subjects. Through a careful study of American high school history textbooks, Trecker showed that the textbooks did not positively affirm women's right to education. Moreover, textbooks mostly choose men when describing outstanding leaders, while women are

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portrayed as passive and passive as if forced to accept a fate orchestrated by politics and economics. In 1982, Kelly and Nielsen (1982, as cited in Sun, 2010) showed that some textbooks in the United States, they found that there were very few images of women in textbooks: a large proportion of housewives were in the house, most of the women in social occupations were teachers, nurses or secretaries, etc., women were often in the background in illustrations, and the number of women in textbooks decreased with the increase in the grade level of the textbook. They concluded that the image of women is generally distorted and denied in textbooks and that the representation and language of gender in textbooks reinforce gender inequality, solidify women's roles in the family, and weaken women's public identity. Martha A. Jones, Catherine Kitetu, and Jane Sunderland (1997) examined gender stereotypes in foreign language textbooks using virtual characters involved in dialogue in three English textbooks and found that much has been done to promote gender equality in education. However, the level of gender equality in textbooks is not encouraging. In addition, the authors discuss how gender-imbalanced conversations can inhibit female students' participation in exercises.

Ram Lila (2008) examined gender biases in primary school textbooks taught in public sector schools in Pakistan. Ram conducted a content analysis of textbook illustrations and the results indicated that they reflected gender biases in Pakistan. Female representation (30.1%) was considerably lower compared to male images (69.9%) and women were presented in stereotypical roles. For example, women's occupational roles were restricted to traditional female professions such as nurses, while household work was typically shown to be a female's sole domain. An analysis of fifth-grade English textbooks in both public and private schools in Punjab (Pakistan), conducted in 2019, revealed significant gender bias (Ahmad & Shah, 2019). The textbooks exhibited a preponderance of male representation over female, with men portrayed as dominant and influential figures, while women were depicted as relatively dependent and secondary roles.

According to Reni Puspitasari Dwi Lestariyana, Handoyo Puji Widodo, and Urip Sulistiyo (2020, p. 1150), "Despite the existence of many studies into gender representation in language textbooks, little work reports the representation of female characters in language textbooks situated in such social contexts as family, occupations, school participation and achievement, and hobbies and interests". Their findings show that despite textbook writers' demonstrated awareness of gender equality and responsiveness, the stereotype of male and female dominance is still contained in English textbooks. Pebri Prandika Putra and Silfira Yuni Angelia (2021) found that there was a bias in gender representation in the English textbook Bahasa Inggris When English Comes in Handy. Males dominate in the number of male inactivities, non-male naming, illustrations and titles, and naming. Women, on the other hand, dominate in the main roles. In addition, men also dominate in terms of family gender roles and public gender roles. Nunung Nurjanah et al. (2022) analyze the Civic Education textbook for XI based on a gender perspective. They found that textbooks published by government and private publishers underrepresented women in the workplace, and that male names appeared more often than women. The illustrations of government-published textbooks are dominated by men and the images of women are not representative, while the textbooks published by private publishers have the most images of men and few women, but the images of cooperation and solidarity between men and women are representative.

Through the researches above, it can be seen that the research perspective on gender issues in foreign textbooks has been continuously improved, and it can be seen that there is a widespread problem of gender inequality in foreign textbooks.

Previous Researches in China: Because China has experienced thousands of years of feudal society, it has been deeply influenced by the traditional feudal idea of "male superiority and female inferiority" for a long time, and the study of gender has also started late, and the relevant research results are also less than those abroad.

The earliest exploration of gender-related issues in China dates back to 1928 with Zhao Yuanren (1928). According to his views in *A Study of Modern Wu Dialect*, he first proposed the existence of differences between men and women in terms of pronunciation and tones. However, at that time, there was a lack of specific research methods and corresponding data support.

In the 1970s and 1980s, influenced by Western Enlightenment ideas, Chinese scholars began studying gender issues in textbooks. Zhang De and Hao Wenyan (1987, p. 91-94) said, "Whether, from textbook illustrations, narrative texts, or character personality portrayal, it is evident that our Chinese language textbooks tend to favor males over females, reflecting traditional rather than non-traditional gender perspectives". They found that independent and brave female images rarely appeared through the study of female images in fairy tale books. The Women's Knowledge Foundation in Taiwan (1988, as cited in Cui, 2019) pointed out differences in the roles of male and female characters in Chinese language textbooks, reflecting the traditional ideology of male superiority and female inferiority.

After 2000, China's research on gender equality in textbooks gradually increased. Meng Qian (2008) conducted an in-depth study of two sets of mainstream English-speaking textbooks and found that gender discrimination was widespread among them. The number of female characters in the textbooks is significantly lower than that of men, the image of outstanding women is missing, and women's careers are confined to traditional fields. In addition, the textbook shows a bias against men's language and professional superiority, as well as stereotypes about women's physical appearance. This sexism may mislead and affect learners' perception of gender roles and evaluation standards.

Yu Beibei (2018) found the following gender discrimination in the Shanghai edition of the Oxford Junior High School English textbook: the frequency of the two sexes in terms of prominent figures and occupations, with men often becoming authoritative

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speakers and women being in passive positions, and emphasizing the social and family roles of male priority. And there is also an implicit ideology of sexism in the textbooks. In 2020, Hu Yajie (2020) proposed to guide students to establish a view of gender equality, critically transform gender bias in textbooks, and improve students' ability to adopt gender perspectives. From the perspective of multi-modal discourse analysis, Qin Jing (2023) made a detailed analysis of gender performance in the 2019 National English Textbook for Primary and Secondary Schools (NSE 2019). She argues that male characters are represented more frequently than women in various occupations, with men often depicted through material processes and women often depicted through psychological processes. In addition, the male figure is used as the overall meaning of the sports role model, while the female figure is used to present the overall meaning of the teacher.

Through the above combing, it can be seen that the research on gender equality in textbooks in China started late compared with foreign countries, from a single research perspective to gradually diversification and improvement, and gender research in different disciplines has gradually matured, but although the gender equality in textbooks has changed in recent years, it has not been thoroughly emphasized, and relevant research needs to be further deepened.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design is key to ensuring the rigor and validity of scientific research. This section will explore in detail how to develop a systematic and comprehensive research design that addresses a specific research question and achieves research objectives. It mainly includes research questions, research subjects, research contents, and research methods.

Research Questions

The core questions of this study are: Is there a gender equality problem in junior high school English textbooks? If so, what are the specific manifestations of these problems? How do these issues affect students' perceptions of gender equality?

Through in-depth research on these issues, we hope to shed light on the current status of gender equality in junior high school English textbooks, provide valuable references for educators and policymakers, and promote the improvement of textbook development and equitable development of education.

Research Contents

This study aims to explore the issue of gender stereotypes in textbook illustrations by systematically analyzing the representation of gender roles in textbook illustrations and texts. The specific research contents are as follows:

First, this study will make statistics on the types of male and female occupational roles in textbook illustrations. By analyzing the number and types of male and female characters in the illustrations, as well as the occupations they occupy, the author will explore how these roles reflect society's traditional occupation orientation of men and women, and reveal possible stereotypes within them. At the same time, special attention will be paid to professional roles that are traditionally considered to be "masculine" or "feminine" to assess whether illustrations reinforce preconceived notions of gender roles.

Second, this study will make statistics on the frequency of male and female characters in different scenes. By analyzing the frequency of male and female characters in different scenes such as family, work, and school, the author will explore the stereotypes of men and women in different scenes. For example, focus on the frequency of female roles in domestic settings, and the frequency of male roles in work scenes to reveal how sociocultural factors influence the presentation of gender roles.

In addition, this study will construct a statistical table of occupational role types for both sexes and disaggregate the roles of men and women in different occupational fields. By analyzing data such as the number and proportion of male and female roles in different career fields, the stereotypes of men and women in different career fields will be revealed. At the same time, the author will discuss how to break stereotypes and promote the development of gender equality education based on actual data.

This study will also focus on character expressions and positional analysis. By taking a closer look at the expressions and body language of the male and female characters in the illustrations, the author will explore how these non-verbal means of communication convey gender ideas and stereotypes. At the same time, it will also analyze the positional relationship between men and women, and explore whether the arrangement of positions implies the social status and role division of men and women.

In summary, this study will systematically analyze the presentation of gender roles, the use of language, the observation of images, the statistics of male and female occupational role types, the statistics of the frequency of male and female scenes, the construction of statistical tables of occupational role types of both sexes, the analysis of character expressions, and the position analysis of male and female composition, etc., to reveal the problem of gender stereotypes in textbook illustrations. The findings will provide an empirical basis for educators and policymakers to advance the implementation and development of gender-responsive education. At the same time, this study will also promote social attention and reflection on gender equality, and provide theoretical support for building a more equal society.

Research Methods

To comprehensively and deeply study the issue of gender equality in junior high school English textbooks, this study will use a variety of research methods, including content analysis, quantitative analysis, and qualitative analysis. Together, these methods will

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provide a multi-angle and multi-dimensional perspective for this study, ensuring the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the study. The content analysis method will help to systematically sort out the content of teaching materials and to classify and count the gender roles, language use, and image presentation in detail. Quantitative analysis uses statistical analysis to provide objective quantitative data to assess gender equality issues in teaching materials. The qualitative approach will dig deep into the cultural, social, and historical context behind the teaching materials to explore the causes and effects of gender equality issues. Through the comprehensive application of these three methods, this study aims to provide a powerful reference for educators and policymakers to promote the improvement of junior high school English textbooks and promote educational equity and progress.

Content Analysis Method: The content analysis of the PEP eighth-grade junior high school English textbooks was conducted to reveal whether there was a gender equality problem in the textbook. Gender equality in textbooks can be objectively assessed by statistically analyzing the presentation of gender roles, the characteristics of language use, the presentation of images, and the gender tendencies of curriculum activities.

Quantitative Analysis: Quantitative analysis provides an objective and concrete approach to assessing gender equality in textbooks. Through the statistics and analysis of the presentation of gender roles, the characteristics of language use, the presentation of images, and the gender tendencies of curriculum activities in the textbooks, it is possible to quantitatively understand whether there is a gender equality problem in the textbooks and evaluate its severity. By counting the number of male and female roles in textbooks, the frequency of male and female roles in various fields, etc. Through the analysis of this data, it is possible to determine whether there are stereotypes or biases in teaching materials regarding gender roles.

Qualitative Analysis: Compared with quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis focuses more on an in-depth exploration of the internal causes and effects of gender equality in textbooks. This approach provides a qualitative analysis of gender equality issues through in-depth reading of the textbook and an understanding of the cultural, social, and historical context behind them. By analyzing the textual content of the textbook, it is possible to explore whether it contains stereotypes or biases about a particular gender.

Combined with quantitative and qualitative analysis, it can comprehensively evaluate the gender equality issues in junior high school English textbooks, provide a strong basis for educators and policymakers, and promote the improvement of textbook development and the equitable development of education.

IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This study provides a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of gender equality in teaching materials, mainly from three key aspects: the presentation of gender roles, the analysis of language use, and the observation of images.

Results and Analysis of the Presentation of Gender Roles

The presentation of gender roles is an important embodiment of gender equality in teaching materials. It not only affects readers' perception of gender but also may reinforce or subvert traditional gender role positioning.

Statistics on the Types of Occupational Roles of Men and Women: According to Table 4-1, it can be seen that there are obvious stereotypes of gender occupational roles in the illustrations of the PEP eighth-grade English textbooks. There are far more types of occupations for men than for women, and most of them are socially valued, such as painters, astronauts, scientists, and historians. Women's occupations are mostly service-oriented, such as teachers, writers, and nurses. This suggests that women are still limited by explicit gender stereotypes in terms of occupational distribution.

Table 4-1 Textbook illustration of statistical table of occupational role types for both sexes

PEP English Textbooks	Male	Female
Volume 1	Teachers, doctors, journalists Heroes, doctors, teachers, writers; singers, painter, merchant, breeder;	Teachers, doctors, generals
Volume 2	athletes, musicians, tea farmers; scientist, historian, politician	Nurse, doctors, writers
Total	15	5

This stereotype of gender roles in textbook illustrations ignores the positive image of women in the workplace and fails to fully demonstrate the positive role played by Chinese women in the process of social development. Especially after the reform and opening up, women's social contributions have become increasingly significant, but this has not been fully reflected in textbooks.

Junior high school is a critical period for students to form a career concept. The inclusion of sexist vocational education in textbooks will have an impact on students' future careers, limit their free choice, and lead to long-term and stable gender-based occupational segregation. Therefore, we need to address this issue to promote gender equality and diversity in education.

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Statistics on the Frequency of Occurrence of Male and Female Scenes: The statistics of the scenes of the two genders in the illustrations of the PEP eighth-grade English textbooks are mainly divided into school, family, and workplace. When counting the frequency of people in an illustration, if the same person appears multiple times in the same scene, it will only be counted once. In addition, for character illustrations that include both teachers and students, teachers are counted in the workplace scene and students are counted in the school scene.

Table 4-2 Statistical table of the frequency of male and female scenes in textbook illustrations

PEP English Textbooks	School		Home		Workplace	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Volume 1	32	25	13	18	28	7
Volume 2	21	16	15	22	6	2
Total	53	41	28	40	34	9

As can be seen from the data provided in Table 4-2, the total frequency of males in school and home scenarios is slightly higher than that of females, but the difference is not significant. However, in the workplace, the total frequency of occurrence of men is much higher than that of women, and the ratio of the total frequency of occurrence of men in the workplace scenario is 3.78:1, showing obvious gender inequality. The illustrations in the PEP eighth-grade English textbooks seem to emphasize the role of men in the workplace, while the image of women in the workplace is relatively neglected. This gender stereotype is not only unfair, but it can hurt middle school students. If we can present more gender-equal textbook illustrations, it will provide students with a more balanced and objective perspective, which will help them develop a sense of equality and critical thinking.

Results and Analysis of the Language Use

The analysis of language use is also an important part of the exploration of gender equality in teaching materials. Language is the carrier of culture and the reflection of ideas. By analyzing the use of language in textbooks, it is possible to uncover the gender biases and stereotypes implicit in them.

Table 4-3 Textbook illustration of statistical table of occupational role types for both sexes

PEP English Textbooks	Male	Female
Positive Words	hard-working, smart, funny, friendly, outgoing, popular, serious, study hard, shy, quiet, happy, excited, lucky, brave, not afraid, strong	excited, outgoing, friendly, hard-working, smart, quiet, shy, kind, funny, serious, popular, unusual,
Total	16	12
Negative Words	unlucky, upset, unhappy, sad, angry, weak,	upset, sorry, worried, afraid, slow, unhappy, bored, tired, angry, sleepy, lazy, wrong,
Total	6	12

There are differences in the description of adjectives between men and women in the textbook, with more positive words for men and more negative words for women, which reflects a gender stereotype and social bias. This stereotype is that men should be strong, brave, confident, and capable, while women should be gentle, considerate, and dependent on others. This depiction restricts the roles and behaviors of men and women, ignores their diversity and individual differences, and is not conducive to the achievement of gender equality. The presence of such gender stereotypes may also harm students' gender identity. Students may be influenced by the gender roles portrayed in the textbook to believe that men and women should possess certain stereotypes of traits and patterns. This can lead to a stereotyped perception of students' gender roles, limiting their self-development and potential.

Results and Analysis of the Observation of Images

Image observation is also an integral part. As a visual language, images can often produce a strong visual impact, which has a non-negligible role in communicating information and cognitive construction. In textbooks, images are not only a medium for conveying knowledge, but also may imperceptibly convey specific cultural values and gender concepts. However, it is important to note that the gender stereotypes and biases that may be implicit in these images can be misleading to learners, further deepening their stereotypes about gender roles.

Character Expression Analysis: Facial expressions are a mirror of people's inner emotions and personalities, and different mental activities are hidden behind different expressions. By observing and analyzing facial expressions, we can get a glimpse of a person's personality, emotional state, and underlying motivations. In the illustrations, the facial expressions of the gender characters are also important clues that reflect their personality traits. Therefore, by analyzing the facial expressions of gender roles in the illustrations,

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we can further explore the concept of gender roles implicit in textbooks, which is of great significance for promoting gender equality and social progress.



Figure 4-1

From Figure 4-1, we can observe that women's facial expression pictures show the action of supporting the head or face, and the facial expression is negative. This portrayal may imply that women are more likely to appear helpless and confused in the face of difficult situations or negative emotions. In contrast, male facial expressions are more likely to show happy expressions, which may suggest that men are more likely to be optimistic and confident in similar situations. The man in the fourth picture is smiling as he looks down at the crowd from a high vantage point. The smile shows his confidence and ambition, while at the same time hinting at his power and authority. Despite his superior status, his willingness to interact with people underscores his affinity. The message of this smile is that he is not only a person with power and authority, but also a person who is passionate and positive.

This gender stereotype is also reflected in textbooks. When depicting a scene in which a character encounters difficulties, confusion, or sadness, the illustrated characters are mostly female. This seems to convey a message that women are more likely to be representatives of negativity and need more attention and care. On the other hand, when creating scenes where the characters are happy, positive, happy, and confident, the illustrations are mostly male. This undoubtedly reinforces the stereotype of men being positive and confident and seems to imply that men have a higher status and authority in society.



Figure 4-2

The two images on the left side of Figure 4-2 show the expressions of the female and male characters in the rain. The lady in Illustration C is in the rain, her hands raised to try to shelter from the rain, she is leaning against the bus stop sign, facing her face, her mouth is wide open, and she exudes a look of horror and helplessness. The male character in Illustration D is more comfortable with the rainy day. With an umbrella in his right hand and a bag of belongings in his left, he fearlessly navigated the storm. His face faced the wind and rain head-on, showing a determined expression as if no difficulty could stop him. This not only reveals the gender bias and stereotypes behind the images but also re-emphasizes the different reactions and attitudes that men and women may have when faced with the same situation.

In the two images on the right side of Figure 4-2, the male and female characters sit at their desks and think in contrast. The female character has a sad face and a furrowed brow, clearly having a problem or problem in her thinking. Her expression was anxious and confused, suggesting that she might be struggling to solve a problem or think about a complex problem. In contrast, the male characters present a completely different expression. The corners of his mouth were raised, and a smile was on his face, clearly thinking about something that would make him happy or happy. This suggests that a man may be more optimistic in his thinking

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process and that he can find positive aspects in it even when faced with problems or challenges, maintaining a relaxed and happy state of mind.



Figure 4-3

The contrast between the two graphs reflects the differences between men and women in their thinking styles and emotional responses. Women may be more delicate, thoughtful, and prone to distress and anxiety, while men are more optimistic, confident, and able to face thoughts and challenges with a more positive mindset. This contrast also further emphasizes the impact of gender roles and stereotypes on people's thinking and emotional responses.

In the ten types of television programs shown in Figure 4-3, we can observe that when depicting more formal programs such as talk shows, sports programs, news, and talent shows, the characters in the illustrations are mostly confident, smiling men. These images convey the dominant position and positive traits of men in formal situations. However, when describing the soap opera genre, the female characters chosen for the illustrations present a very different emotion. This image is intended to show the emotional response of women watching soap operas, which are often depicted as crying, highlighting their emotional, vulnerable characteristics.

Through this series of illustrations, it can be concluded that the textbooks tend to highlight the formal, confident, and positive characteristics of male characters, while the negative characteristics such as emotionality and vulnerability are more emphasized when creating female characters. This stereotype not only limits the diversity of female roles but also fails to fairly reflect the true face of men and women.

Analysis of the Position of Male and Female Compositions

Analyze the compositional positions of the men and women in the illustration to determine whether there is a dominant and dominant situation. In gender representation analysis, information value and salience are at the core. According to visual grammar, the left side of the image presents known information, while the right side presents unknown information, and usually the right side is more informative. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996) proposed the compositional meaning of multi-modal discourse and analyzed three resources: information value, saliency, and framing. These resources play an important role in gender representation analysis, helping to deeply interpret the messages and meanings conveyed by images.



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Figure 4-4

According to the four illustrations of the PEP eighth-grade English textbooks shown in Figure 4-4, it can be observed that the male characters are usually in the center or front of the illustrations, while the female characters are often in the marginal position. This choice of composition is purposeful, conveying the importance of the different characters through the arrangement of positions. From a visual grammar point of view, important information is usually placed in the center, while secondary information is placed at the edges. At the same time, saliency also plays a role, i.e., the more advanced and larger the elements in the image, the more they will attract the reader's attention. This phenomenon shows that in textbooks, male roles are given a higher status and importance. They are placed in a more prominent and prominent position and seem to attract the reader's attention more. In contrast, female characters are placed in marginal positions and may be seen as secondary or supportive. This composition reflects the differences emphasized in textbooks when presenting male and female characters: male characters are seen more as primary, central messengers of information, while female characters may be seen as supporting characters or complementary information.

This phenomenon reveals the stereotypes and prejudices that textbooks hold when portraying the roles of men and women. It reinforces the dominance of men in education and academia, while women may be seen as subordinate or merely complementary. This presentation can be misleading to readers, especially teenagers who are forming gender notions.

In summary, to analyze gender equality in teaching materials more comprehensively, it is necessary to pay attention to the presentation of gender roles, the analysis of language use, and the observation of images. Only in this way can we accurately identify and solve the problem of gender equality in teaching materials, and promote equity and progress in education.

Reasons for Gender Inequality in Textbooks and Suggestions for Improvement

Reasons for Gender Inequality in Textbooks: In pursuit of Gender inequality has always been a difficult issue to ignore in our education system. Gender equality is challenged by sociocultural contexts, constraints of the education systems and policies, the consciousness and concept limitations of textbook writers and educators, and even the impact of the teaching workforce.

Firstly, gender roles within social structures and family education subtleties significantly shape students' understanding of gender, affecting everything from career choices to self-identity. Secondly, the emphasis on exam-focused education often neglects the promotion of gender equality awareness in teaching materials and the lack of attention from education policymakers further hinders students' understanding of equal rights. Furthermore, influenced by patriarchal societies and traditional attitudes, writers may inadvertently perpetuate gender inequality due to insufficient training in gender equality. And many educators also unaware of gender biases within educational materials or lack the necessary consciousness to address them.

In a nutshell, a comprehensive approach is necessary to achieve genuine educational equity between genders. It involves reexamining societal gender divisions, enhancing the understanding of gender roles within families, improving the educational environment, providing gender parity training for textbook authors, and encouraging educators to promote gender equality. These efforts aim to create a fair and inclusive learning environment, allowing students to develop a balanced perspective on gender.

Suggestions for Improvement: To achieve gender equality in teaching materials, improvements and countermeasures are needed in several ways: Firstly, developing gender awareness and critical thinking skills of students. To cultivate healthy gender attitudes and mindsets in students, we are supposed to take a comprehensive approach concerning family, educational institutions, mass media and pop culture etc. ; Secondly, strengthening attention and support in education policies. Instituting robust monitoring and responsibility systems will be vital for regularly reviewing the impact of educational policies on gender parity and for holding institutions and policymakers answerable when commitments are unmet; Thirdly, raising awareness and professionalism of textbook developers. Supplying developers with a wealth of resources on gender equality, such as illustrative case studies and in-depth research findings, would assist in the precise portrayal of related information; Fourthly, strengthening teachers' attention and guidance in teaching. Reinforcing educators' focus on gender equity is crucial in cultivating students' awareness of fairness and respect for diversity, contributing to a healthier and more inclusive campus culture.

On Gender Equality in Junior High School English Textbooks: A Case Study of the Chinese PEP Eighth-Grade Textbooks

CONCLUSIONS

Upon careful examination of the eighth-grade English curriculum for junior high, this paper has identified gender inequity issues with gender representation, language use, and illustrations. The textbooks predominantly favor male representation over females, portraying males in public and professional roles while confining females to traditional and domestic spheres. The language used in the text exhibits gender bias, ascribing positive traits to males and negative ones to females. Additionally, the illustrations reinforce gender stereotypes, depicting males as brave and powerful and females as fragile and passive. These elements combined may impair students' understanding of gender equality, threatening the integrity of equitable education. The study recommends that educators and textbook creators prioritize gender parity, implementing effective strategies to rectify these issues and advance educational justice.

This study, while yielding significant insights, is not without its constraints. The most important of these is the narrow scope of the analysis, which is limited to the PEP English textbook for eighth-grade students, omitting a variety of other published editions. Consequently, it is incumbent upon subsequent inquiries to broaden their remit to encompass diverse textbook versions, thereby gaining a richer, more nuanced perspective on the portrayal of gender equity in English language education at the junior high school level in China. Furthermore, the methods employed here are primarily content and quantitative analysis, which preclude the depth of insight that might be afforded by qualitative approaches such as interviews and surveys. Future endeavors could profit from an integrative methodology, including discourse and critical discourse analysis, to plumb the intricacies of linguistic representation in educational materials. As societal norms evolve and education advances, there is an anticipation that an increasing number of textbooks will embody principles of gender parity, fostering a more equitable learning environment conducive to student's holistic development. In conclusion, educational authorities should enhance their oversight and craft pertinent policies that advocate for the integration of gender equality in instructional resources. At the same time, teachers and educators should also actively guide students to establish correct gender concepts and cultivate students' gender awareness in educational practice. Through the joint efforts of the whole society, we believe that equity and progress in education can be achieved.

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